Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
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News Release

For immediate release *June 21, 2006*

Vancouver lawyers' achievements recognized

Vancouver, BC – The Legal Services Society (LSS) presented awards to Bruce Clokie, Art Demeulemeester, and Phil Rankin at a recognition event held June 20 to acknowledge Vancouver lawyers' work on behalf of legal aid clients.

The Tariff Recognition Dinner was one of several that have been held around the province. In 2005/2006, lawyers participating in the BC legal aid plan provided representation in more than 30,000 cases and advice for more than 135,000 issues.

"It is a privilege to work with such dedicated lawyers," said Executive Director Mark Benton. "The contributions of the legal profession are the mainstay of our legal aid plan. Every day across BC, lawyers who provide legal aid services make access to justice a reality for people with low incomes," he added.

Clokie, Demeulemeester, and Rankin received individual awards in acknowledgement of their achievements and outstanding service over the years. Criteria used in the process of selecting lawyers for recognition include their willingness to take on difficult cases, their years and quality of legal aid service, and their community service.

Bruce Clokie, called to the Bar in 1988, has practiced family and child protection law since 1993, and devoted much of his career to serving the needs of legal aid clients. He has accepted almost 500 child protection cases and over 450 family cases from LSS since January 2000. An advocate for mediation and collaboration, he is known to our intake staff for his experience and the fact that he gets results for his clients.

Art Demeulemeester has been a sole practitioner, practicing exclusively in criminal law, ever since he was called to the BC Bar in 1971. The bulk of his practice is at the Provincial Court level; however he has represented many clients in Supreme Court on a range of cases and also at the Court of Appeal. Since January 2000, Art has accepted 826 criminal cases from LSS. He is known by our intake staff for his thoughtful and kind attention to his clients.

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LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family issues and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).

Legal information is available through Legal Information Outreach Worker (LIOW) services, LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites. (See www.lss.bc.ca for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre and LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*

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Phil Rankin, called to the bar in May 1979, has a general law practice, concentrating on criminal and immigration law, but does some civil litigation and some administrative law, including judicial reviews. Lately he has been doing police complaints and some general police law. Since January, 2000 Phil has accepted almost 600 criminal cases and almost 100 immigration cases from LSS. He is known for speaking his mind fearlessly — a quality he brings to the representation of his clients, but always in a professional manner.

See the attached backgrounder for further biographical details about the award recipients.

Previous recognition events have been held in Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Surrey, Terrace, and Victoria. In all, 14 BC lawyers have received awards for outstanding service.

LSS, in partnership with lawyers, is developing quality assurance initiatives to ensure people with low incomes receive high calibre service. These measures promote best practices among all legal aid lawyers through education and other means. Recognition of lawyers' exemplary contributions is one part of this work.

The quality assurance program is funded by a grant from the Law Foundation of BC.

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